

Sir, Pope Francis has recently spoken to the Faithful about the necessity for Roman Catholics to study history in a holistic sense. He has urged Catholics to approach historiography without negating traditions and the collective memory of the Roman Catholic people. In that same exhortation, the Pope has highlighted the importance of remembering martyrs in your religion. This is a refreshing approach to the practice of history nearly lost in our posthuman age. Either our historians are skewed in favour of a purely materialistic understanding of time arising out of logical positivist assumptions. Or they are busy inventing pasts which never existed. Indian historians are polarized today more than ever by either valorizing the past or simply negating the differences between history and itihasa. Those championing history negate itihasa. The zealots who only focus on itihasa often follow no scientific method in arriving at their conclusions. It is as if folk and tribal wisdom have no value. Everything is reduced to nomenclature --- either an event is subaltern or, it has to be dismissed without respectful academic interrogation.

Pope Francis's wisdom on the other hand is more wholesome. For instance, my lineage of Tantra is matriarchal and comes from tribal communities of women at Assam's Kamakhya. The first practitioners of my 'Guru parampara' trace themselves to the collective spiritual wisdom of Assamese tribal women who lived secluded from society in the forests near the famous Kamakhya temple at Guwahati. Just because hundred years ago their histories were not recorded does not negate their unique identity within my religion and within India's indigenous history of spirituality. Pope Francis's invitation for rethinking the discipline and discourse of history is therefore pertinent to me as a Shakti Upasak.

Similarly, it is high time that we record the interior

subjective experiences of your religion's holy women and men. Otherwise, future generations will only remember your temporal achievements. On a personal note, it never crossed my mind to record the interior lives of Christian Brothers like Robert Cal Whiting cfc, Bro. Jus Harrison cfc; Jesuits like the late Fr. Horace Rozario SJ, Fr. Lawrence Abello SJ, Fr. Augustine Cordeiro SJ and Fr. Joe Remedios SJ. What was their encounter with the "mysterium tremendum et fascinans"? Unless we now start recording the lives of women and men who strive to be perfect and are alive, we will have AI misleading both Hindus and Roman Catholics. For example, I was guided by Sr. Mary Ross IBVM; but I do not know about her interior life and now she is no more. This is a great loss to India's collective spiritual heritage. This Loreto nun through her deep Faith and fidelity to her Congregation became a light for all of us. Holiness is not the patrimony of any one community in a plural nation like ours. The Truth is One, though sages call it by many names. I finish by asking your readers to turn to AJ Cronin's 1941 novel, *The Keys of the Kingdom*. The way Cronin framed this novel pre-empted Vatican II. This was pointed out to me by the nonagenarian Christian Brother, Br. Maurice Baptist Finn cfc through recent WhatsApp chats. The tragedy is that we know that Br. Finn cfc served this Archdiocese long and yet we do not know how he encountered God; it is insufficient to know that he built the Regina Mundi School single-handedly in Goa. We must listen to this Papal advice; for our shared heritage as pilgrims of hope will crumble if we do not study the history of those who are peace-makers. The priest in Cronin's novel was devoid of hate and as holy as one can be. We need to record their interior lives if we want to leave a legacy for future generations.

Yours truly,

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